AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

Claim 1 (currently amended): An access control method for use with a broadcast communication network, the method comprising:

receiving an encoded program at a subscriber unit via the broadcast communication network; and

preventing decoding of the encoded program at the subscriber unit for at least one preselected time period, preselected in accordance with a preference of a user of the subscriber unit,

wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to disabling data resident in a removable security element which is operatively associated with said subscriber unit.

Claim 2 (original): A method according to claim 1 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to a selection inputted by the user.

Claim 3 (original): A method according to claim 1 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to disabling data inputted at a headend of the broadcast communication network.

Claim 4 (original): A method according to claim 3 and wherein said disabling data comprises addressed restriction information which is individually addressed to the subscriber unit.

Claim 5 (cancelled)

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Claim 6 (currently amended): A method according to claim [[5]] 1 and wherein said disabling data resident in the removable security element is stored in the removable security element before the removable security element is provided to the user for use thereby.

Claim 7 (original): A method according to claim 3 and wherein said disabling data comprises at least a portion of characteristics of the at least one preselected time period.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A method according to claim [[5]] 1 and wherein said disabling data comprises characteristics of the at least one preselected time period.

Claim 9 (original): A method according to claim 7 and wherein said characteristics of the at least one preselected time period comprise at least one of the following:

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and an ending time of the at least one preselected time period; and

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and a length of the at least one preselected time period.

Claim 10 (original): A method according to claim 8 and wherein said characteristics of the at least one preselected time period comprises at least one of the following:

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and an ending time of the at least one preselected time period;

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and a length of the at least one preselected time period; and

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period, beginning after the removable security element is inserted in a removable security element receptacle in said subscriber unit for a specified time period, and a time remaining to an end of a current day.

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Claim 11 (original): A method according to claim 1 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of a program in a clear form at a channel to which the subscriber unit is tuned during said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 12 (original): A method according to claim 1 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of a pay program in a clear form at a channel to which the subscriber unit is tuned during said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 13 (original): A method according to claim 1 and wherein said program comprises at least one of the following: a television program; a pay television program; a commercial; a video clip; a program guide; an electronic program guide (EPG); data; multimedia information; a hypermedia link; a computer program; computer data; an application which may be downloaded; a program applet; teletext information; an audio program; a textual information program; an image generating program; electronic-mail; and voice mail.

Claim 14 (original): A method according to claim 1 and wherein said at least one preselected time period comprises at least one of the following: a periodic time period; and a specific time period.

Claim 15 (original): A method according to claim 2 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the steps of:

generating a disabling code in response to said selection inputted by the user; and

employing said disabling code to prevent decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 16 (cancelled)

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Claim 17 (original): A method according to claim 3 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the steps of:

transmitting the program associated with an individually addressed disabling code from the headend;

receiving the program with the associated individually addressed disabling code at the subscriber unit;

separating the individually addressed disabling code from the program to produce a separated individually addressed disabling code;

processing the separated individually addressed disabling code to determine whether the individually addressed disabling code is addressed to the subscriber unit; and

preventing decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period if said individually addressed disabling code is addressed to the subscriber unit.

Claim 18 (original): A method according to claim 17 and wherein said disabling code is associated with a payment code determining a payment rate.

Claim 19 (currently amended): A method according to claim [[5]] 1 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the steps of:

generating a disabling code in response to said disabling data resident in the removable security element; and

employing said disabling code to prevent decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 20 (original): A method according to claim 17 and wherein said disabling code is comprised in one of the following: an Entitlement Control Message (ECM); and an Entitlement Management Message (EMM).

Claim 21 (original): A method according to claim 1 and wherein said at least one preselected time period is selected to immediately follow an additional time period

during which programs broadcast via the broadcast communication network are displayed in a clear form.

Claim 22 (currently amended): An access control method for use with a broadcast communication network, the method comprising:

receiving an encoded program at a subscriber unit via the broadcast communication network; and

enabling decoding of the encoded program at the subscriber unit for at least one preselected time period, preselected in accordance with a preference of a user of the subscriber unit,

_____ wherein said step of enabling decoding comprises the step of enabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to enabling data resident in a removable security element which is operatively associated with said subscriber unit.

Claim 23 (currently amended): Apparatus at a subscriber unit for providing access control to broadcast transmissions, the apparatus comprising:

a receiver and decoder unit operative to receive and decode a program broadcast via a broadcast communication network in an encoded form; [[and]]

a processor operatively associated with the receiver and decoder unit and operative to disable decoding of the program at the receiver and decoder unit for at least one preselected time period, preselected in accordance with a preference of a user of the subscriber unit; and

a security element associated with said processor and operative to provide to said processor disabling data resident in the security element, said disabling data being operative to disable decoding of the program at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period.

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Claim 24 (original): Apparatus according to claim 23 and also comprising a user input device operatively associated with said processor and operative to enable input of data determining said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 25 (original): Apparatus according to claim 24 and wherein said user input device comprises at least one of the following: a keypad; a remote control unit; and a mouse pointer.

Claim 26 (original): Apparatus according to claim 24 and also comprising a memory for storing said data determining said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 27 (original): Apparatus according to claim 23 and wherein said receiver and decoder unit is also operative to receive the program with a disabling code associated therewith, to separate the disabling code from the program, and to provide the disabling code to the processor, and

said processor is also operative to determine whether the disabling code is addressed to the subscriber unit, and to prevent decoding of the program for said at least one preselected time period if the disabling code is addressed to the subscriber unit.

Claim 28 (cancelled)

Claim 29 (currently amended): Apparatus according to claim [[28]] 23 and wherein said security element comprises a removable security element.

Claim 30 (original): Apparatus according to claim 29 and wherein said removable security element comprises a smart card.

Claim 31 (currently amended): Apparatus at a subscriber unit for providing access control to broadcast transmissions, the apparatus comprising:

a receiver and decoder unit operative to receive and decode a program broadcast in an encoded form; [[and]]

a processor operatively associated with the receiver and decoder unit and operative to disable decoding of the program at the subscriber unit for at least one preselected time period upon receipt of a time period disablement input; and

a security element associated with said processor and operative to provide to said processor the time period disablement input, the time period disablement input comprising disabling data resident in the security element, said disabling data being operative to disable decoding of the program at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 32 (currently amended): Apparatus at a subscriber unit for providing access control to broadcast transmissions, the apparatus comprising:

a receiver and decoder unit operative to receive and decode a program broadcast in an encoded form; [[and]]

a processor operatively associated with the receiver and decoder unit and operative to enable decoding of the program at the subscriber unit for at least one preselected time period, preselected in accordance with a preference of a user of the subscriber unit; and

a security element associated with said processor and operative to provide to said processor enabling data resident in the security element, the enabling data being operative to enable decoding of the program at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 33 (new): An access control method for use with a broadcast communication network, the method comprising:

receiving an encoded program at a subscriber unit via the broadcast communication network;

preventing decoding of the encoded program at the subscriber unit for at least one preselected time period, preselected in accordance with a preference of a user of the subscriber unit,

wherein the step of preventing decoding comprises:

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disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to a selection inputted by the user;

generating a disabling code in response to said selection inputted by the user; and

employing said disabling code to prevent decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period, and

the disabling code is associated with a payment code determining a payment rate.

Claim 34 (new): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to disabling data inputted at a headend of the broadcast communication network.

Claim 35 (new): A method according to claim 34 and wherein said disabling data comprises addressed restriction information which is individually addressed to the subscriber unit.

Claim 36 (new): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to disabling data resident in a removable security element which is operatively associated with said subscriber unit.

Claim 37 (new): A method according to claim 36 and wherein said disabling data resident in the removable security element is stored in the removable security element before the removable security element is provided to the user for use thereby.

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Claim 38 (new): A method according to claim 34 and wherein said disabling data comprises at least a portion of characteristics of the at least one preselected time period.

Claim 39 (new): A method according to claim 36 and wherein said disabling data comprises characteristics of the at least one preselected time period.

Claim 40 (new): A method according to claim 38 and wherein said characteristics of the at least one preselected time period comprise at least one of the following:

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and an ending time of the at least one preselected time period; and

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and a length of the at least one preselected time period.

Claim 41 (new): A method according to claim 39 and wherein said characteristics of the at least one preselected time period comprises at least one of the following:

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and an ending time of the at least one preselected time period;

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and a length of the at least one preselected time period; and

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period, beginning after the removable security element is inserted in a removable security element receptacle in said subscriber unit for a specified time period, and a time remaining to an end of a current day.

Claim 42 (new): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of a program in a clear form at a channel to which the subscriber unit is tuned during said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 43 (new): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of a pay program in a

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clear form at a channel to which the subscriber unit is tuned during said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 44 (new): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said program comprises at least one of the following: a television program; a pay television program; a commercial; a video clip; a program guide; an electronic program guide (EPG); data; multimedia information; a hypermedia link; a computer program; computer data; an application which may be downloaded; a program applet; teletext information; an audio program; a textual information program; an image generating program; electronic-mail; and voice mail.

Claim 45 (new): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said at least one preselected time period comprises at least one of the following: a periodic time period; and a specific time period.

Claim 46 (new): A method according to claim 34 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the steps of:

transmitting the program associated with an individually addressed disabling code from the headend;

receiving the program with the associated individually addressed disabling code at the subscriber unit;

separating the individually addressed disabling code from the program to produce a separated individually addressed disabling code;

processing the separated individually addressed disabling code to determine whether the individually addressed disabling code is addressed to the subscriber unit; and

preventing decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period if said individually addressed disabling code is addressed to the subscriber unit.

Claim 47 (new): A method according to claim 46 and wherein said disabling code is associated with a payment code determining a payment rate.

Claim 48 (new): A method according to claim 36 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the steps of:

generating a disabling code in response to said disabling data resident in the removable security element; and

employing said disabling code to prevent decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 49 (new): A method according to claim 46 and wherein said disabling code is comprised in one of the following: an Entitlement Control Message (ECM); and an Entitlement Management Message (EMM).

Claim 50 (new): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said at least one preselected time period is selected to immediately follow an additional time period during which programs broadcast via the broadcast communication network are displayed in a clear form.

Claim 51 (new): Access control apparatus for use with a broadcast communication network, the apparatus comprising:

a receiver receiving an encoded program at a subscriber unit via the broadcast communication network;

a processor operatively associated with the receiver and operative to prevent decoding of the encoded program at the subscriber unit for at least one preselected time period, preselected in accordance with a preference of a user of the subscriber unit, the processor being operative to prevent decoding by:

disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to a selection inputted by the user;

generating a disabling code in response to said selection inputted by the user; and

employing said disabling code to prevent decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period,

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wherein the disabling code is associated with a payment code determining a payment rate.